

## The Doberman Diet

**Help your Dobe be all it can be by feeding nutrient-rich meals.**

*By Christina Cox-Evick*

The Working Dobe Here we have the true athletes of the dog world. Working dogs are not only under great stress, they are also called upon to exert a huge amount of physical energy. Dobermans training heavily in agility, schutzhund, search and rescue and other demanding endeavors need that extra boost from their food. Dogs exposed to this type of physical and mental pressure often require performance diets. These super-calorie foods may have a protein-to-fat ratio as high as 30-to-20, providing a Dobe with the fuel necessary to go out and do an honest days work.

One difficulty that arises when dealing with a working dog is the fact that many activities are of an on-again, off-again nature. Poling, who works her Dobermans in search and rescue, recommends finding a brand of food that offers similarly formulated puppy, adult and performance diets that can be changed with relative ease according to the dogs current age and training regime. When on a search, my dogs need a higher calorie food than normal to offset the tremendous amount of energy expended. Because the company I chose offers a variety of formulas, I am able to make rapid changes without my Dobe's experiencing the digestive difficulties that could occur if I had to change brands.

Like most large breeds, Dobermans are predisposed to a disorder commonly referred to as bloat. When a dog suffers from bloat, its stomach swells up with liquid and gas that it cannot pass naturally. This is frequently accompanied by the twisting of the stomach on its axis, called torsion. If your Doberman ever exhibits symptoms including extreme restlessness, excessive drooling and swelling in the stomach rush it to the veterinarian immediately. Bloat kills within hours.

Though unsure as to the exact cause of bloat, the veterinary community has offered several theories. Among them are digestive problems relating to soy-based foods; the swelling of dry food after ingestion; exercising or drinking too much water within an hour of eating; and a weakness in the ligaments that hold the stomach. Consequently, a soy-free dry food that is soaked until softened is suggested. Dogs should not exercise for an hour prior to or after a meal. Deep-chested breeds, such as the Dobe, are more prone to bloat than other breeds.

Intelligent though it may be, your Doberman cannot go to the store and read the various package labels. Nor will it look in the mirror one day and realize the ol waistline needs trimming down a bit. No, your dog depends on you to take care of such considerations. As long as you manage the little things, such as feeding, training and providing a warm bed, your Doberman will take care of the big things, such as being your companion and devotee par excellent!

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